

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 ICA-11
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R 261614Z APR 78
FM AMEMBASSY BONN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8037
INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY ROME
AMCONSUL BREMEN
AMCONSUL DUSSELDORF
AMCONSUL FRANKFURT
AMCONSUL HAMBURG
AMCONSUL MUNICH
AMCONSUL STUTTGART
USMISSION USBERLIN

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PINT, GW
SUBJECT: THE FDP HOLDS FOUR STATE CONVENTIONS

BEGIN SUMMARY: FOUR FDP STATE CONVENTIONS LAST WEEKEND
WERE MARKED BY A GENERAL EFFORT TO PRESERVE FLEXIBILITY
IN MAKING FUTURE COALITION DECISIONS. THE PARTY IS
CLEARLY WORKING TO KEEP ITS OPTIONS OPEN FOR THE FUTURE.
END SUMMARY.

1. LAST WEEKEND, FREE DEMOCRATIC PARTY (FDP) LEADERS
MET IN FOUR STATE CONVENTIONS -- KARLSRUHE (BADEN-
WUERTTEMBERG), BREMEN, KASSEL (HESSE), AND DUISBURG
(NORTHRHINE-WESTPHALIA) -- TO CHART THEIR PARTY'S
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COURSE FOR THE MONTHS AHEAD. TOGETHER, THESE MEETINGS
REFLECTED AN EFFORT TO ACHIEVE TWO CLASSICAL FDP
GOALS: TO BOLSTER THE IMAGE OF AN INDEPENDENT AND
UNITED PARTY, AND TO KEEP OPEN FUTURE COALITION OPTIONS.

2. THE FOUR CONVENTIONS PRODUCED NO NEW COALITION
COMMITMENTS, EVEN THOUGH THE COALITION ISSUE HAS

ACQUIRED GREAT IMPORTANCE IN TWO STATES (HESSE AND NORTH RHINE-WESTPHALIA) IN WHICH THE FDP NOW SHARES POWER WITH THE SPD.

A. IN HESSE, THE FDP IS DEBATING WHETHER TO RENEW ITS COALITION WITH HOLGER BOERNER'S SPD OR TO TAKE UP REPEATED OFFERS BY ALFRED DREGGER'S CDU TO FORM A NEW COALITION FOLLOWING THE OCTOBER 8 ELECTIONS. SO FAR, RANK-AND-FILE SENTIMENT APPEARS TO FAVOR CONTINUING THE ALLIANCE WITH SPD, BUT THE HESSIAN FDP HAS ANNOUNCED THAT IT WILL NOT MAKE A DECISION UNTIL ITS SPECIAL CONVENTION ON JUNE 16. IN KASSEL LAST WEEKEND, THE PARTY REAFFIRMED THIS INTENTION.

B. IN NORTH RHINE-WESTPHALIA, THE STAGE HAS NOW BEEN SET FOR MINISTER-PRESIDENT HEINZ KUEHN (SPD) TO STEP DOWN IN THE FALL. THIS WILL GIVE HIS SUCCESSOR -- WHETHER JOHANNES RAU OR DIETHER POSSER -- TIME TO PREPARE FOR THE 1980 STATE ELECTIONS. IN DUISBURG LAST WEEKEND, FDP STATE CHAIRMAN HORST LUDWIG RIEMER REAFFIRMED HIS PARTY'S DESIRE TO CONTINUE THE SOCIAL-LIBERAL COALITION UNTIL THE END OF THIS LEGISLATIVE PERIOD (1980), BUT HE LEFT OPEN THE QUESTION OF WHAT HAPPENS AFTER THAT TIME. RIEMER ALSO SAID THAT THE CONCEPT OF AN "HISTORICAL" SPD-FDP ALLIANCE, WHICH KUEHN BEGAN IN 1966 AND WHICH LED TO THE BRANDT-SCHEEL LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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GOVERNMENT THREE YEARS LATER, NO LONGER APPLIES.

3. THE BADEN-WUERTTEMBERG AND BREMEN CONVENTIONS TOOK PLACE UNDER LESS DRAMATIC CIRCUMSTANCES, LARGELY BECAUSE THE FDP IS OUT OF POWER IN BOTH STATES AND HAS NO REALISTIC HOPE OF CHANGING THAT SITUATION IN THE NEAR FUTURE. THERE WERE NO GREAT SURPRISES. IN KARLSRUHE, THE FDP ELECTED 32-YEAR-OLD JUERGEN MORLOK TO SUCCEED MARTIN BANGEMANN AS LAND CHAIRMAN. IN BREMEN, THE FDP REELECTED HORST-JUERGEN LAHMANN AS STATE CHAIRMAN.

4. THE FDP NATIONAL PRESIDUM DECLARED ON APRIL 24 THAT THE FOUR CONVENTIONS HAD UNDERSCORED THE PARTY'S UNITY, INDEPENDENCE, AND SELF-CONFIDENCE. THIS IS A POINT WHICH THE FDP HAS TO STRESS OFTEN, IN ORDER TO COMBAT CONTRARY IMPRESSIONS CAUSED BY ITS FLEXIBLE POLITICS AND DIFFERENT POLITICAL MARRIAGES. PRESENTLY, THE FDP RULES WITH THE SPD IN BONN AND IN FOUR LAENDER (BERLIN, HAMBURG, HESSE, AND NORTH RHINE-WESTPHALIA); IT RULES WITH THE CDU IN LOWER SAXONY AND THE SAARLAND; AND IT WARMS THE OPPOSITION BENCH IN FIVE LAENDER (BADEN-WUERTTEMBERG, BAVARIA, BREMEN, RHINELAND-

PALATINATE, AND SCHLESWIG-HOLSTEIN). LATE LAST WEEK,
FDP NATIONAL CHAIRMAN (AND FOREIGN MINISTER) HANS-
DIETRICH GENSCHER AGAIN DEFENDED SUCH COALITION

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BEHAVIOR AS ENABLING THE FDP TO PROMOTE "LIBERAL
PRINCIPLES." GENSCHER ALSO STRESSED THAT THE FDP'S
FLEXIBLE PATTERN OF STATE ALLIANCES SERVES TO PREVENT
A BUNDESTAG-BUNDESRAT DEADLOCK -- I.E., A TWO-THIRDS
OPPOSITION CONTROL OF THE BUNDESRAT WHICH WOULD ENABLE
THE UNION EFFECTIVELY TO VETO LEGISLATION WHICH THE
SCHMIDT GOVERNMENT BRINGS THROUGH THE BUNDESTAG.

5. THESE FDP CONVENTIONS WILL RELIEVE SOME PRESSURE
ON THE SPD/FDP COALITION IN BONN, ALTHOUGH THE FOUR
STATE ELECTIONS THIS YEAR WILL STILL REQUIRE THE TWO
PARTIES TO EMPHASIZE THEIR DIFFERENCES FROM TIME TO

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TIME. A FEW WEEKS AGO, SPD BUNDESTAG CHIEFTAIN HERBERT WEHNER (AND OTHERS) WERE DARKLY WARNING THAT AN EARLY RETIREMENT OF HEINZ KUEHN MIGHT BRING DOWN THE SOCIAL-LIBERAL GOVERNMENT IN NORTHRHINE-WESTPHALIA' AND IN TURN HAVE A DEVASTATING IMPACT ON THE BONN COALITION. RIEMER'S PLEDGE LAST WEEKEND SEEMS DESIGNED TO PUT THAT FEAR TO REST, BARRING NEW SCANDALS OR DISARRAY IN THE NORTHRHINE-WESTPHALIAN SPD.

6. THE FDP IS A PARTY WHICH CAN GOVERN ONLY IN COALITION, AND WHICH MUST WALK A FINE LINE BETWEEN THE NEED FOR POLITICAL FLEXIBILITY AND THE EVER-LATENT CHARGE OF POLITICAL OPPORTUNISM. SELF-INTEREST REQUIRES THE PARTY TO PREPARE, CONSTANTLY BUT CAREFULLY, FOR THE DAY WHEN A CHANGE IN COALITION PARTNERS IS INDICATED, WHETHER IN DUSSELDORF OR ELSEWHERE. THE FOUR CONVENTIONS LAST WEEKEND UNDERSCORED THIS POINT. MEEHAN

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